



Devon

# Welcome To Devon



## Accessing healthcare services

# Contents

This guide helps you understand how to register with a GP, get medical help, and look after your health in Devon. It also shows which services are free and where to find support for you and your family.

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# Introducing the NHS

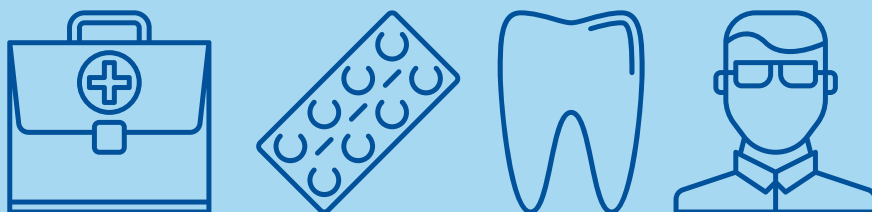
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**The National Health Service (NHS) provides healthcare for everyone living in the UK. Most NHS services are free at the point of use, funded through taxes rather than insurance.**

## **How the NHS works**

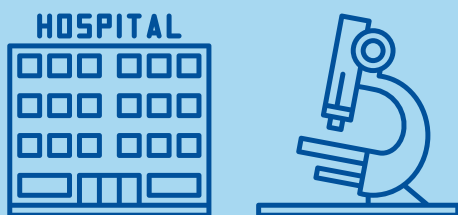
### **Primary care:**

first contact for most health needs (GPs, pharmacies, dentists, opticians)



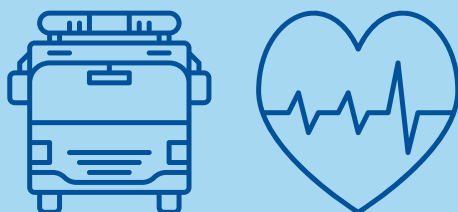
### **Secondary care:**

hospitals and specialists (usually after a GP referral)



### **Emergency care:**

for life-threatening illness or injury (call 999 or go to A&E)



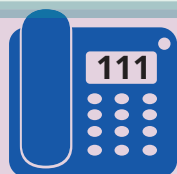
### **Urgent but not life-threatening:**

call NHS 111 or visit an Urgent Care Centre





# How the NHS works: a guide for migrants



You can contact the 24-hour service **NHS free phone line** by dialling **111** to get free health information and advice. You can ask for an **interpreter in your language** by saying "interpreter please."



## Pharmacy



Pharmacists can offer clinical advice and medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, tummy trouble and aches and pains. The pharmacist will let you know if you need to visit a doctor or direct you to other healthcare professionals to make sure you get the help you need. You can also buy medicines for minor illnesses or first-aid supplies in a pharmacy or supermarket; to find the nearest pharmacy, go to: [www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy).



## Basic medicines

## Dentists and Opticians



- Find a dentist [www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist)
- Find an optician [www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/opticians/](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/opticians/)

If your tooth is painful you should **call 111 for Urgent Dental Care Services**



## Teeth and eye care

## GP practice or medical centre



A GP can offer medical advice, provide a diagnosis and prescribe medicines. They might be your first point of contact for many physical and mental health concerns. The GP practice is also responsible for coordinating and managing your long term healthcare and they can refer you if you need more specialised hospital services. It is best to register with a GP practice to meet your ongoing health needs. [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/)



**Medical management, coordination of long term care and access to hospital specialists**

## Community health services



Some health services are accessed in the community, and not in hospitals. These include mental health, child health and antenatal services and sexual health and family planning clinics.



## Pregnancy, child health, contraception services

## Walk-in or Urgent Treatment centres

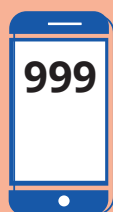


If you need urgent medical care for minor injuries such as cuts, sprains and small fractures, or urgent medical advice, you can directly go to a walk-in or urgent care centre without an appointment. These centres are usually open during daytime hours.



## Minor injuries or urgent medical advice

## Emergency services



**Call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.** The telephone operator will advise you what to do or where to go next. An ambulance may be sent to provide treatment or transport the patient to hospital. Hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments are open 24 hours every day of the year. You can access these services directly and without an appointment. [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-call-999/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-call-999/)



## Medical emergency or life-threatening situation

## Emergency mental health

If you have seriously harmed yourself or are about to do so, call **999** for an ambulance or go straight to A&E. **If you are thinking about suicide, talk to someone at the Samaritans by calling 116 123.**

## Suicidal thoughts or serious self harm

# Your rights to healthcare: a guide for migrants

## Everyone has a right to register with a GP (General Practitioner)

You do not need proof of address, immigration status, ID or an NHS number.

Find your nearest GP practice and register online.

[www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/)

If you are having difficulty registering with a GP you can:

- Download a GP Access Card and show this to the GP receptionist. [www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/gp-access-cards/](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/gp-access-cards/)
- phone NHS England (0300 311 22 33 ) or Doctors of the World (0808 1647 686) for help



## These health services are free for everyone



- GP advice and treatment
- Services that are provided as part of the **NHS 111 telephone advice line**
- **Accident and Emergency** services provided at an A&E department, **walk-in centre, minor injuries unit** or **urgent care centre**
- Diagnosis and treatment of some **infectious and sexually transmitted diseases**
- NHS services provided for **COVID-19** investigation, **diagnosis, treatment** and **vaccination**
- **Family planning** services (contraception)
- Treatment for a **physical or mental condition** caused by **torture, female genital mutilation, domestic violence** or **sexual violence**



## Specialist health services are also free for:



- Refugees
- Asylum seekers
- Victims or suspected victims of Modern Slavery
- dependants

People whose application for asylum has been rejected may still have access to free NHS services. Check if you are entitled to free health care. [www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide)

Prescription medicines, dental and eye care are normally not free in England but asylum seekers who are financially supported by the Home Office will be given an HC2 certificate to get full help with these health costs. Anyone can apply for this support, see further advice on how to apply.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide)



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## Choosing the right service and paying for healthcare

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| Type of Care                        | Example situations                                   | Where to go / who to call                                                                                                                                                                             | Do I have to pay?                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Emergency</b>                    | Chest pain, stroke, serious injury                   | Call <b>999</b> or go to <b>A&amp;E</b>                                                                                                                                                               | Emergency care is free for everyone.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Urgent</b>                       | Illness that cannot wait but is not life-threatening | Call <b>NHS 111</b> or visit an <b>Urgent Care Centre</b>                                                                                                                                             | Emergency care is free for everyone.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Routine care</b>                 | Cough, medication review, long-term condition        | <b>GP practice</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    | GP appointments are free for everyone.                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Minor illness</b>                | Cold, sore throat, allergies                         | <b>Pharmacy (chemist)</b>                                                                                                                                                                             | Prescriptions are free for some people (e.g. children, people on benefits, pregnant women). If you have to pay, it is £9.90 per item.                                                 |
| <b>Advice &amp; self-help</b>       | Managing at home, learning about the NHS             | <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                            | All online advice is free to access.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Dental, eye and hearing care</b> | Dentist and optometry                                | Call <b>NHS Devon Dental Helpline (03330 063 300)</b> to register or for emergencies.<br><br>Find a dentist or optician here <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/service-search">www.nhs.uk/service-search</a> | Optometry is free for some people (e.g. children, people over 60, people with certain conditions).<br><br>Dentistry tends to be private and only some treatments are free on the NHS. |

If you need help paying for healthcare, you can apply for support through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Ask your GP or pharmacy for an HC1 form. If approved, you'll receive an HC2 certificate (full help) or HC3 (partial help). Some people also qualify for a Medical Exemption (MedEx) certificate for free prescriptions. [Check if you're eligible for help | NHSBSA.](#)





## Translators and interpreters

Even though it may seem easier to bring a family member or friend to help translate at your appointment, we would instead recommend that you tell the person you are booking with that you need an interpreter (translator), along with what language you require. They can either book a trained medical translator or use the language line service which is through a phone.

This is to ensure that safe and accurate translations take place to ensure the safety of both you as a patient as well as the clinician giving medical advice.



## Chaperones

If you are having a check-up or examination and would like someone else in the room, you can ask to bring someone with you (called a chaperone) or ask the clinic to provide one.

GP practices have both male and female doctors and nurses. You can ask to see a man or a woman if that helps you feel more comfortable, but it might not always be possible.



## Your rights and how you can help

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Everyone using the NHS has rights – and we all play a part in helping services run smoothly.



### Your rights

- To be treated with dignity and respect
- To have information you understand
- To use an interpreter if needed (free)
- To confidentiality and privacy
- To give consent before treatment
- To raise concerns or complaints



### How you can help

- Attend or cancel appointments on time
- Give accurate information about your health
- Take prescribed medicines and follow advice
- Accept offers of vaccination and screening
- Stay home when unwell to protect others
- Eat well and stay active
- Don't smoke – support is available
- Use NHS services wisely
- Be kind to staff and others

If you are unhappy with care or want to raise a concern, speak to your GP practice manager first. [Learn how to make a complaint \(NHS England website\).](#)





### Mental Health

Looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical wellbeing. There are specialist services for adults and children dedicated to those who have become refugees, as well as general mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression.

We are fortunate to have our own specialist Mental Health Team who care for all our patients and you can book directly with them. For more specialist care there is the Community Mental Health Team, with separate adult and children's services. If you are worried about your mental health and would like to discuss your options, then call and book an appointment with a GP.

**If you are having a mental health crisis and need immediate help, call the 24/7 Urgent Mental Health helpline on 111.**





Vaccinations protect you, your family, and your community from serious diseases such as flu, measles, and polio.

In the UK all routine vaccinations are free for you and your family. Please make an appointment at your GP practice to discuss your vaccination history and what additional vaccines you may need. If you are unsure what vaccines you or your family have had, you can safely restart the schedule again

In many countries, illnesses like polio and measles can still circulate. In the UK these diseases are rare thanks to vaccination.

Infection prevention tips: wash your hands often, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home if you are unwell.





## Vaccine abbreviations

|                          |                                                      |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| BCG/TB                   | Bacillus Calmette-Guérin                             |
| DTaP                     | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis                    |
| Hep B                    | Hepatitis B                                          |
| Hib                      | Haemophilus Influenzae B                             |
| HPV                      | Human Papillomavirus                                 |
| IPV                      | Polio                                                |
| MenACWY                  | Meningitis A, C, W & Y                               |
| MenB                     | Meningitis B                                         |
| MMR                      | Measles, Mumps and Rubella                           |
| MMRV (from January 2025) | Measles, mumps, rubella, from varicella (chickenpox) |
| PCV / PPV                | Pneumococcal                                         |
| RSV                      | Respiratory syncytial virus                          |
| Td/IPV                   | Tetanus, Diphtheria and Polio                        |



## United Kingdom vaccination schedule

|              |                                                          |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Birth        | BCG ( <i>if high risk</i> )                              |
| 8 weeks      | DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B, Men B, Rotavirus                     |
| 12 weeks     | DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B, Men B, Rotavirus                     |
| 16 weeks     | DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B, PCV                                  |
| 1 year       | PCV, MMR(V), Men B                                       |
| 18 months    | MMRV, DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B                                 |
| 3 yrs 4 mths | MMR(V), DTaP / IPV                                       |
| 12 years     | HPV                                                      |
| 14 years     | TdIPV, MenACWY                                           |
| Pregnancy    | Influenza, Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis), RSV |
| 65 years     | PPV, Influenza, Shingles                                 |
| 75 Years     | RSV, Covid 19                                            |

2-3 year olds, all school-age children, those with a clinical risk, carers and healthcare workers are also entitled to the influenza vaccine every winter. Those with certain health conditions, for example, immunosuppressed patients may also be eligible for additional vaccines. Please ask your medical practice.

[Complete routine immunisation schedule from 1 September 2025 – GOV.UK](#)



## What is screening?

Screening means checking for certain conditions before you have symptoms. It helps find problems early so they can be treated more easily. Everyone is offered screening based on their age, sex and health background. Ask your GP which screenings are right for you. All screening is free of charge, and if any problems are found then there is an automatic referral to the specialists so that they can manage them for you.



### Screening in pregnancy

- The screening tests offered during pregnancy in England
- are either ultrasound scans or blood tests, or a combination
- of both. Ultrasound scans may detect conditions such as
- spina bifida. Blood tests can show whether you have a
- higher chance of inherited conditions such as sickle cell
- disease and thalassaemia, and whether you have infections
- like HIV, hepatitis B or syphilis. There are extra tests for
- conditions such as Down's syndrome.



### Newborn screening

- Every baby is offered a thorough physical examination soon
- after birth to check their eyes, heart, hips and, in boys, testicles.
- This is to identify babies who may have conditions that need
- further testing or treatment. The examination is carried
- out within 72 hours of birth and then again at 6 to 8 weeks
- of age, as some conditions can take a while to develop.



### Cervical screening

- Cervical screening (a smear test) checks the health of your
- cervix. The cervix is the opening to your womb from your
- vagina. The sample is checked for certain types of human
- papillomavirus (HPV) that can cause changes to the cells
- of your cervix. These are called "high risk" types of HPV.
- All women between the age of 25 and 50 will be invited
- every 5 years, and then between 50 and 65 every 5 years.



## **Aortic aneurysm screening**

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening is a way of checking if there's a bulge or swelling in the aorta, the main blood vessel that runs from your heart down through your tummy.

Men aged 65 or over are most at risk of getting AAAs. Screening can help spot a swelling in the aorta early on when it can usually be treated. It involves a quick and painless ultrasound of your tummy.



## **Breast cancer screening**

About 1 in 8 women in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer. If it's detected early, treatment is more successful and there's a good chance of recovery.

It uses an X-ray test called a mammogram that can spot cancers when they're too small to see or feel.

All women aged from 50 to their 71st birthday who are registered with a GP are automatically invited for breast cancer screening every 3 years.



## **Bowel cancer screening**

Bowel cancer is the 4th most common type of cancer. Screening can help find it at an early stage, when it's easier to treat.

Bowel cancer screening is available to everyone aged 56 or over.

You use a home test kit, called a faecal immunochemical test (FIT), to collect a small sample of poo and send it to a laboratory. This is checked for tiny amounts of blood.

## Other support and services for extra help

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### 1. Stop smoking (Better Health Quit Smoking):

[Devon Stop Smoking Service | Devon County Council Stop Smoking Service Provided by Best You](#)

### 2. Drug and alcohol support (NHS Live Well):

[Drug addiction: getting help – NHS](#)

### 3. Sexual health services:

[Devon Sexual Health – providing sexual health services that support healthy relationships and sexual well-being – Devon Sexual Health](#)

### 4. Specialist support for migrants and refugees:

[Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support \(DCRS\) – Migration and resettlement](#)

### 5. Refugee Support Devon:

[Our Vision – Refugee Support Devon](#)

### 6. Devon Mental Health Alliance Network:

[Devon Mental Health Alliance | Working together for better mental health](#)

**Space for personal notes:**







**Devon**

**Space for personal notes:  
GP details, medications, emergency contacts**

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**If you want to get in touch about  
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